

WHAT IS AND WHAT MIGHT  
BE IN RURAL EDUCATION IN  
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PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY OF  
THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION

EDMONTON:

PRINTED BY A. SHNITKA, KING'S PRINTER

★ 1935

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# I. Our School System As It Is

## OUR SCHOOL SYSTEM IS OUT OF DATE

For the past thirty years the Province of Alberta has been operating a system of school administration inherited from the old Territorial régime. From time to time improvements have been made in this system, but its main features remain as they were in 1905. It has accordingly become very clear to those who are charged with the responsibility of administering Alberta's Schools that if these schools are to continue to serve the purpose for which they were established, to say nothing of making further progress, a new chapter in Alberta's educational history must now be written. The strain of these depression years has revealed dangerous flaws and radical defects in the educational structure which cannot be removed merely by patching. The thirty-years-old structure must be rebuilt.

What are these radical defects?

### 1. THE NEEDS OF RURAL COMMUNITIES ARE NOT ADEQUATELY SERVED

In the first place, we can no longer make adequate provision for the educational needs of rural communities. In 1934 only 33 new school districts were established, and these only with the greatest difficulty. In 1921 there was one school in operation for every 206 persons of our population; but in 1931 there was one school in operation for every 216 of our population, with no improvement since that time.

In at least 50% of our ungraded schools there is no way by which boys and girls who have completed Grade VIII can have access to high school instruction. Many of these schools are permitted by the local inspector to give instruction in Grade IX, when the teacher is competent and the enrolment is not large; but very few schools of this type can offer such instruction without detriment to the interests of the elementary pupils, for whom, primarily, the schools were established. In our system of 3,325 rural school districts, each approximately four miles square and administered by a local board, there is seldom a sufficient number of high school pupils in any one district to warrant the engaging of a second teacher, or money enough to pay him. Neither the Rural High School nor the Consolidated School can fully solve the problem of advanced instruction. These consolidated districts have superior financial resources, but they are seriously handicapped by the difficulty of providing conveyance. In sparsely settled areas, our rigorous climate and lack of all-weather roads do not encourage children to travel long distances, twice every day. The plain fact is, therefore, that for a large number—too large a number—of our country boys and girls, schooling must cease with the completion of Grade VIII.

### 2. THE SPREAD IN RURAL ASSESSMENTS IS TOO GREAT

In the second place, there is great disparity in the financial resources of rural school districts. The most striking feature of our system of rural school financing is its glaring anomaly. While each district is under legal obligation to provide for the education of all the children within

its borders, there is such a wide variation in assessable wealth that some districts are forced to levy at a rate twenty times as high as that which is sufficient for others.

### **3. THE CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT FOR RURAL TEACHERS ARE NOT UNIFORM**

The vital urge towards successful achievement in the rural school is the creative skill and personality of the teacher. Yet the local conditions under which the teacher works have a most important relation to the quality of his work. No teacher, however good, will be indifferent to such things as security, salary, and an agreeable environment. Yet the evidence submitted before the Legislative Committee on Rural Education shows that the majority of local boards have scant means of judging the suitability of a teacher for the particular school for which he is applying; that changes are made too frequently; that teachers whose work is unsatisfactory, instead of being eliminated, find employment in another district; that the salary does not increase with increasing experience and efficiency, and the rate of pay bears little relation to the value of the teacher; that though the local district may be making heroic efforts to maintain its school, salaries are frequently inadequate and also sadly in arrears; and that as there is little prospect for advancement, the ablest teachers are constantly leaving the rural schools for town positions. In 1934, the arrears in teachers' salaries reached a total of more than \$318,000, and this amount has increased since that time. For these ills, which constitute the greatest handicap to rural schools, there seems to be no effective remedy under an administrative system in which the board of each local district is an independent employing authority.

### **4. THE SMALL UNIT IS NOT EFFICIENT**

Our present organization of rural school makes ease and efficiency of administration impossible.

Each of the 27 inspectors of elementary schools is assigned, on an average, 132 school districts and 171 classrooms. But the inspector cannot, under present conditions, give more than 40% of his time to the inspection and supervision of schools. In many instances these technical phases of his work are outweighed in importance by the insistent demands of administrative problems. Yet rural teachers, many of them inexperienced, are called upon to face some of the most perplexing problems in the whole field of education. Clearly they need help from the inspector, who has little opportunity to give it.

Increasing the number of inspectors will not alone produce greater efficiency, if the inspectors must continue to deal with a large number of independent school boards and school units. What we really need is a much less rigid and inelastic system of administration that will enable the inspector to simplify and minimize educational problems, co-ordinate administrative measures, place his schools where they can render the best service, and his teachers where they can do their most effective work.

### **5. THE SMALL UNIT IS NOT ECONOMICAL**

Our present system of small units is not economical. Having regard for reason and candor, how can we say that we need thirty-five hundred school boards and secretaries and school audits and bank accounts? Such



a duplication of duties and expenses is unbusinesslike. The results of experiments with the larger unit in the Berry Creek Area and the Peace River Block prove that by eliminating this duplication a very considerable saving can be effected.

## **6. EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY IN RURAL SCHOOLS IS NOT EQUAL TO THAT IN URBAN SCHOOLS**

There is still another aspect of our system that shows its want of economy, and at the same time illustrates the inequality of educational opportunity in rural and urban districts. Taking from the 1935 Canada Year Book the figures for rural and urban population, school enrolment and classrooms, we reach the following illuminating facts.

- (1) Whereas 30.7% of our urban population attend school, only 18.4% of our rural population is to be found in rural schools.
- (2) In 1933 the average enrolment per classroom for the Province as a whole was 30; in urban schools it was approximately 37, and in rural schools it was approximately 23.

In other words: only one out of every five persons in rural communities goes to school, while one out of every three in the towns and cities goes to school. At the same time, every rural school in Alberta takes one and one-half teachers to do the work done by one teacher in an urban school. Surely the rural school is not an economical institution.

Again: taking the average rural school budget, you will find that of the total budget, 75% goes to the teacher, while only 50% of the budget is so used in urban districts. This means that the urban school has 50% of its revenue left to spend upon equipment, supplies, health services, better janitor service, supervision, or any such desirable things. The rural school has a smaller proportion of the budget left after the teacher is paid. It does not pay the highest salaries; but the largest part of its revenue is spent on the teacher and other things must suffer accordingly; and if the rural school can pay only the lower rates of salary, it can buy only the poorer quality of service. Rural schools pay the largest proportion of their available funds for the teacher's services, but they get a lower level of service. They cannot secure and hold the better teacher; and they have less money at their disposal for other necessary services.

## **7. WE NEED DIVERSIFIED EDUCATION, BUT WE CANNOT PROVIDE IT**

Another grave defect in our present school system is its inability to provide the diversified type of education now required for our adolescent population. In 1934, the number of pupils enrolled in our high schools, compared with our total school population, was twice as large as it was in 1924, and four times as large as it was in 1914. In two decades the proportionate number of our high school pupils has doubled twice, and it seems likely within the next decade to include the whole of our adolescent population. This high school group exhibits a wide range of differing interests, aptitudes, and personalities. For the great majority of this group formal education will end in the secondary school. What is required, therefore, is a diversified high school programme, suited to the needs of this majority. But a diversified programme is so much more expensive than the academic programme that few schools, under present

conditions, can offer it. The academic programme, even though unsuitable, continues to be offered because it is cheaper. To solve this problem in secondary education is a task of extreme difficulty. We cannot diversify our high school programme and at the same time make it more generally available in rural communities without a change in the system of administering our schools.

### **8. IF WE EQUALIZE THE COSTS WE MUST EQUALIZE THE SERVICE**

In fine, it may be said that we have arrived at the place where we can no longer have good rural schools without removing the disabilities under which they operate. It is true that we can make them operate for longer periods in the year, and we can spread the burden of their cost more uniformly over the people of the Province. But if they are still the same kind of school, it is neither fair nor justifiable to ask the people of the Province to equalize this cost.

### **ALMOST ALL OUR PROBLEMS IN RURAL EDUCATION ARE PRODUCED BY THE SMALL UNIT**

"Throughout its entire investigation," states the recent Report of the Legislative Committee on Rural Education, "and in connection with almost every phase of the problem of rural education, the Committee has been confronted with the limitations imposed by the existing system of administration. It regards as highly significant the unanimity and positiveness with which witnesses expressed the conviction that most of the weaknesses which have been noted in rural education are inevitable under our system of administration, and that for the remedy we must turn to the larger administrative unit."

## **II. What Might Be**

The foregoing sketch of the defects in our school system seems to show that the outstanding weakness of the system is the inequality of opportunity as between rural and urban children. What is the remedy? The administrative change most frequently recommended for the correction of these shortcomings is such a reorganization as would reduce the number of rural school authorities from 3,300 to 50, or even fewer. In support of this change in the size of the administrative unit, the opinions of educational experts throughout Canada may be quoted, and the present practice in other countries may be cited. The following pronouncements indicate the feeling of educational authorities in Canada:

### **Expert Opinion Favors the "Larger Unit"**

**British Columbia**—The report on "School Finance in British Columbia," issued a few weeks ago, made this recommendation:

"That the system of having schools administered by a multiplicity of school boards (826) be abandoned, and that the Province be divided into educational areas, approximately the present inspectorial divisions, and that each of these areas be administered by a Director of Education."



**Alberta**—The report of the Legislative Committee on Rural Education, adopted by the Legislature in April last, recommended as follows:

“That the Department of Education give careful study to the question of the larger unit of administration, in an effort to evolve a plan that will permit of the bringing of rural schools to a higher degree of efficiency, and that will, at the same time, be acceptable to the people of the Province.”

**Saskatchewan**—The first recommendation of the Committee on School Finance and School Grants, reporting in 1933, reads thus:

“To ensure better returns for the money now spent on education in rural districts particularly, and to avoid payment of excessive and unnecessary interest rates on school advances, school loans and debentures, better business administration is desirable. This can best be brought about by reducing costs through a larger administrative unit under a board of education, and by improving results through better supervision of school work under a superintendent of schools.”

**Manitoba**—A special committee composed of representatives of the Manitoba Trustees' Association, the Manitoba Union of Municipalities, the Manitoba Teachers' Federation, the Department of Education, and the Manitoba Tax Commission, reporting in 1933, made this recommendation, amongst others:

“That larger units of administration be established, inasmuch as the traditional school district has been found to be an inadequate unit for administrative and revenue purposes.”

**Ontario**—The Educational Finance Committee of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation reported thus in October of this year:

“Small-section administration means furthermore that many rural boys and girls are unable to obtain a secondary education. Great areas of the Province, even in the counties, are neither in a secondary-school district nor reasonably accessible to one. Of course, rural pupils in large numbers attend urban secondary schools, and the county, where there is one, becomes responsible for their tuition. However, secondary schools are not usually located with a view to the needs of rural pupils, and the consequence is that the cost of transportation, or of living away from home, denies to many rural boys and girls a reasonable opportunity of attending a secondary school. “For these reasons we recommend that Ontario adopt the county as the unit of school administration, except for cities, metropolitan areas and large towns. We believe that only in this way can the schools of the Province be freed to develop naturally in harmony with present-day needs.”

#### **The “Larger Unit” is Already in Use Elsewhere**

The following statements of actual administrative practice will indicate that the so-called “larger unit” is in general use.

**In England**, “the organization of education under the control of a few large and populous areas means that no administrative barriers are placed in the way of equalizing educational opportunity. The areas

are large enough and densely enough populated to permit of local educational systems, coherently planned to meet the needs of all the children of the kingdom. The large areas of administration, the comparative generosity of the central grant, and the special attention paid to the needs of poor areas, all tend to remove differences in opportunity due to inequalities in local wealth."

**In Scotland**, "the system established in 1872 consisted of small units not essentially different from that existing in Alberta today. In 1918 these were swept away and replaced by elected county and city educational authorities, thirty-five in all for the entire country. The 'larger unit' of administration means that the nation is not hindered by the administrative set-up from giving effect to its desires for equality of opportunity. The unit is large enough to permit any degree of equality of opportunity desired by the people of the nation."

**New Zealand** is divided for the purpose of providing elementary and secondary education into nine districts, each with a District Board. These boards make all appointments to teaching positions, although the salary schedules are all fixed by the central authority.

**In Australia**, as in Canada, education is in the hands of the provinces. Each province, however, has a very highly centralized system of schools. There are no small units as in this country. Local school committees exist in most communities but their powers are entirely advisory. Education is completely supported by appropriations from consolidated revenue. The Province may thus be said to be the unit of administration.

**United States**—In twelve of the States the county has been adopted as the unit of school administration. In these states the average number of teachers per unit is 95. The most completely organized of these schemes are to be found in North Carolina, West Virginia, Ohio and Maryland; the new law in Ohio affording the best example of this type of legislation.

**Canada**—Quebec and British Columbia are the only Provinces in Canada to depart from the small district system. In each of these Provinces the municipality is the unit for school administration. In the latter Province there are still more than 800 rural schools in territory outside organized municipalities, and these are, of course, carried on by local boards. Permissive legislation, allowing the organization of the municipal system of administration, has been in effect in Manitoba for many years. Thus far but one municipality has taken advantage of it.

### **Experiments With the Merging of Schools in Alberta**

Alberta itself is not without helpful experience in the matter of merging schools. Two experiments have been tried in recent years, which resemble in many respects a large administrative unit, but which have been brought into being without in any way changing or modifying The Alberta School Act. These experiments may be termed the Turner Valley merger and the Berry Creek merger. It is interesting to note that these

two instances occurred respectively in one of the wealthiest and in one of the most poverty-stricken areas of the Province. The Turner Valley experiment shows what can be done in an area of great potential wealth and high taxable values. The Berry Creek area is in the heart of the drouth-stricken country, and may be considered the least wealthy section, being an area of very low taxable values. They are thus at the two extremes, one being of unusual wealth and the other of unusual poverty.

### **(1) The Turner Valley Experiment**

"On the 29th of October, 1929, there was effected an amalgamation of the Turner Valley school district, the Black Diamond village district, the Glen Mede district, with parts of the Uphill and Lineham. Since then, development in the south has necessitated taking in the whole of the Uphill district. As the average school district is about four miles square, the new district became as big as four ordinary districts. It is over fifteen miles from north to south, from five to six miles wide, and extends in a general south-easterly direction following the path of the derricks.

"Building operations, including fencing and equipment, were provided for in the 1930 budget, as well as purchases of sites in a flourishing area where land values were soaring. It is interesting to note that while assessment was more equitable, and a great many things were assessed which had previously escaped, the mill rate was not raised; and with account taken of the rebates to offset the old districts' assets, the net tax of landowners, in spite of the building expansion, was less than that of the previous year. All buildings were fully modern, with hardwood floors, electric lighting, gas heating, up-to-date ventilation and toilets, equipment the best that money could buy. Every effort was made the first year to provide good accommodation and good teachers.

### **Measures for Improving Health and Hygiene**

"It was felt that children living in an environment such as obtains in any highly industrialized community were entitled to advantages of health equal to those enjoyed in a large city. With this in mind, the educational authorities made a thorough study of the special advantages enjoyed by Calgary children, and decided to emulate their urban neighbor. An agreement was reached with three doctors living in the valley for regular medical inspection of schools, and a district nurse was engaged. Children were thoroughly examined by the doctors and nurse, and inoculated. Teeth, tonsils, and eyes were carefully examined, and it was found that 55 children had defective eyesight. An arrangement was made with a Calgary specialist of Province-wide repute, to perform the tonsil operations. This necessitated hospital services which were also arranged for at a favourable rate. The children were taken to Calgary and brought back after a day in the hospital. A reputable eye specialist came several days to the Valley and re-examined sixty children, of whom forty-two were found to be in pressing need of glasses. The optometrist recommended accompanied him, and prescribed the necessary lenses made by a reliable firm at low prices. Anaesthetics for the tonsil operations were administered by the Valley doctors at a favourable rate. The total cost of all these services, including medical and nursing supervision, tonsil operations, hospital fees, anaesthetics, car hire, eye examinations, purchase of glasses, was \$2,134, or, in other words, a complete medical bill of health for the sum of \$4.15 per child. It was stipulated that those who

were able to pay for this service should do so, and about one-third of the cost was so defrayed by grateful parents. These children were given medical services at considerably less than half the usual cost, and in every case the very best practitioners were engaged. No child was deprived of these benefits through poverty; in fact, it was felt that the children of poverty-stricken parents, of whom there are very many in the Valley, were more deserving of these services than their more fortunate companions. In all schools, milk was delivered each morning, and teachers reported that children suffering from malnutrition immediately took on a new lease of life, climbing rapidly to new heights in competition with their fellows.

"For a time nursing and medical services were provided by the Department of Health through Dr. Saunders and his staff of nurses at High River. This included systematic inspections and inoculations at no cost to the district.

"A musical instructor was engaged, and every one of the thirteen rooms had music on the time-table twice a week. Pianos were installed in the schools and the children progressed so rapidly that concerts were held in three parts of the Valley twice a year, and classes entered at Easter in the Calgary Musical Festival won many awards. Playground apparatus was set up in each school, and in fine weather outdoor sports and gymnastic exercises were practised under the direction of a full-time playground supervisor. More recently, specialists in household economics, shop work and physical education, with the necessary accommodation and equipment, have been added.

### **Costs**

"The sum paid out the first year for building purposes alone was \$31,403.72. The assets of the schools at the time of the amalgamation in November, 1929, were \$12,169.09. Today buildings, equipment, and supplies owned outright by the amalgamated district are valued well over \$45,000.00. And, in addition, there was on the 1st of January, 1933, \$34,000.00 in the bank. Taxes unpaid at the end of 1932 were 30%. The tax rate for 1932 was 11 mills on personal property and 10 mills on realty.

"About a year after the amalgamation took place the ratepayers were called together, and an accounting was given them by the Official Trustee in preference to a duly elected school board. This is direct evidence of satisfaction with the existing arrangements."

### **(2) The Berry Creek Experiment**

"An area having 67 organized districts, with mill rates varying all the way from three to thirty, was reorganized as a single district with a ten-mill rate over the entire area. In some instances this meant a higher tax, but in operating districts it meant a very much lower school tax. In one instance the school tax last year was \$16.80 per quarter section; on the same quarter this year it was \$4.80; and this was not the extreme by any means. Schools were placed to the best advantage to take care of the pupils, and two straight high school rooms were introduced. Better service was given than had existed before at a considerably lower cost.

"We are operating twenty-six rooms at present, but I expect that this will cut to twenty-three for the coming fall term. It cost the old

districts \$25,020.04 to operate for the spring term. In the fall term we paid back salaries of the districts in the amount of \$8,126.42. We spent \$1,026.00 for moving and repairing schools and other buildings, an outlay which will not be incurred again. There were sundry accounts of \$494.61 chargeable to the old districts. Our total cost chargeable to operation for the fall term was \$10,859.74, compared with the above \$25,020.04 of the old districts for the six months of the spring term. Since the first of the year we have made an adjustment on the salaries and at the present time our total pay-roll is \$1,870.00 per month. This will be cut by \$195.00 per month this fall. **Our total cost of operating for the whole year ending June 30th, 1934, will be somewhere in the vicinity of \$25,500.00, which is slightly more than it cost the old districts to operate for the spring term only of 1933.**

"We have cleared off all the old debentures with one exception. We have maintained two purely high school rooms, four rooms where the work of high school and senior public school grades is taught, and twenty-two public school rooms.

"Berry Creek School District's annual statement for 1934 has been prepared, showing a saving to the ratepayers of the Berry Creek Area of \$13,000.00 by a decrease in the cost of operation of their schools in the fiscal year of 1934. The figures and facts which have been compiled following little more than a year's operation indicate that the cost of operation was reduced from \$37,000.00 to \$23,395.00 in one year's time, with a better school service for the area affected."

While it is not contended that all the services provided in Turner Valley could be made available immediately in each area, many of them, and probably all, could be made available ultimately.

### **A PROPOSED PLAN**

The success of these experiments has led to a considerable demand for the drafting of a plan to make such a reorganization available for the entire Province. The following outline indicates in a broad way the form which such a reorganization might take:

- (1) The first step would be the grouping of schools of the Province into Divisions. These Divisions might be of varying sizes, according to the nature of the area to be served, topography of the country, homogeneity of the population, etc. It is hoped that it may be found feasible to make the larger school units and the boundaries of reorganized municipal districts co-terminous. Other suggestions have been that the School Divisions might conform to the present provincial constituencies or the inspectorial divisions. The simplest organization would be to have the school and municipal units identical. A Division should contain from 65 to 100 schools. This number is suggested, since at the outset all the work of supervision could be carried by one officer until the Division is in a position to introduce a more diversified educational programme requiring more supervision.
- (2) The business of the Division would be in the hands of a Board of five Directors, who would be elected by the ratepayers either from subdivisions or at large.

- (3) This Divisional Board would have powers analogous to those enjoyed by the boards of trustees in city and town municipalities today; e.g.:
- (a) It would prepare an estimate of the money required to maintain a minimum educational service throughout the Division.
  - (b) It would requisition the Municipal Council for these funds, just as the city board does.
  - (c) It would have as a permanent adviser a Superintendent of Schools, or inspector, whose duty it would be to furnish educational leadership, assist teachers, and see that the Division got the greatest possible value for its money.
  - (d) It would have power on the advice of the Superintendent to move school buildings, operate or close schools, arrange for the conveyance of children, engage and place teachers; in short, exercise all the powers now commonly enjoyed by boards in urban municipalities.
  - (e) It would make provision for secondary education in whatever phases the Division felt that it needed and could afford.
  - (f) It would expend the money received on requisition from the municipal authorities in accordance with the terms of The School Act.
  - (g) It would discharge all other duties commonly assigned to boards in larger areas.
- (4) That the Divisional Board might have trustworthy advice at all times on local conditions, it is not proposed to dis-establish the school districts as at present constituted, but to have the ratepayers of each district choose an advisory committee. It would be the duty of this committee, in addition to advising the Divisional Board, to act as trustees of the local property, arrange for extra services which might be required locally, beyond the minimum provided by the Divisional Board, and be responsible for such improvements as the Superintendent might advocate, or local pride suggest.
- (5) Provision would be made in the legislation to safeguard the interests of minorities in all such matters as separate schools, religious instruction, the primary course in French, and similar matters.
- (6) Each Division would constitute a general taxing area for the purpose of providing the funds required for the minimum educational service for which the Divisional Board is responsible, the levy to be made on the equalized assessment ordinarily used by the municipal authorities.
- (7) Divisions of the size mentioned above would probably number from 43 to 45.
- (8) The only possible occasion for increased cost at the outset would be in the increase of the present supervisory staff from 27 (inspectors) to, say, 43 or 45. Potential savings greater than this are discussed below.
- (9) The cost of maintaining the local Superintendents or Inspectors would be borne by the Government in the same way that the cost of maintaining local Inspectors is now provided.
- (10) The legislation providing for equalization grants would be continued but adapted to meet the new organization.

### III. The Advantages of the New Plan

No single reform in our present system can be expected of itself to solve all the difficulties which are inherent in the problem of publicly supported state-wide education. The larger unit of administration, however, offers more possibilities of improvement than any other proposal that has up to the present time been advanced. Proponents of this new type of organization believe that it will vastly improve the efficiency of our schools, and will also rid educational authorities, including trustees, of many administrative problems which now ride them like an incubus.

The following are some of the advantages which, among others, are reasonably certain to result from the setting-up of any system of larger administrative areas such as those already proposed in this pamphlet:

1. There would be approximately an equal distribution throughout the Province of the cost of education. The inequality and injustice of one district having to levy a rate of only three mills to operate its school while another district sets a rate of sixty-five mills or more for the same services or less would be an impossibility. A system of equalization grants as between the larger units of administration would overcome almost completely the present unjustifiable variations in taxation rates for school purposes.

2. Besides equalizing the cost of education, the larger administrative unit would equalize educational opportunity for elementary school pupils of the Province. Although the period of operation in our elementary schools has steadily increased for several years, not all boards by any means are able to provide 200 days of school during each year. In 1934, for instance, 234 schools in Alberta out of a total of 3,428 operated less than 180 days. With larger administrative units the part time school would practically disappear.

3. The greatest problem in providing education today is that which arises at the secondary school level. Rural areas are at a tremendous disadvantage in this respect as compared with the cities, towns and villages. The School Act makes possible rural high school consolidations, but up to the present only seventeen consolidations have been effected. These consolidations have met a real need, but as they are purely voluntary organizations, their development has been slow. It is impossible for the local district as at present constituted to cope with the problem of high school instruction. Superimposing this advanced instruction on that of the elementary grades in the one-roomed school is not a solution; it is a mere expedient, and a poor one at best. With the larger administrative unit the Board could take a broad view of its secondary school problem. It could decide how and to what extent secondary education should be provided; it could determine what type of training it would make provision for,—academic, commercial, technical or a combination of all; and it could decide where the schools would be placed in order to meet best the requirements of the largest number. The larger administrative unit offers the best answer that has yet been advanced to the vexed question of secondary instruction in strictly rural areas.



4. The administration of education, as a whole, would be placed in more capable hands. In the small local unit it is often difficult to secure three trustees who have a sound grasp of educational problems, and who are genuinely interested in making the necessary provision for efficient instruction. In the larger unit there would be no difficulty in electing five public-spirited men or women who would have the personal qualifications, the breadth of view, the judgment and the experience, necessary in a school trustee.

5. The Superintendent of Schools or Inspector of Schools would be required to attend all board meetings, and his knowledge as an educational expert would always be available for the use of the Board. The Superintendent would have information in regard to the conditions in each local community in his area; he would know his teachers personally; he would have an understanding of the particular needs of each school. All this knowledge would be at the disposal of the trustees, when they were called upon to make decisions as to policy or administrative detail.

6. One of the outstanding weaknesses in our present system is the lack of continuity in instruction service. Far too many changes in teachers take place which a little tact and understanding could avoid. It is not an exaggeration to say that with every change of instructors, granted the abilities of the former and the present teacher are equal, there is a loss of two or three weeks' time for every pupil. It takes even a longer period for the new teacher to become well adjusted to her new surroundings, and to gain an accurate knowledge of the attainments and personalities of her pupils. Complete readjustment must take place before a teacher is capable of giving her best to the classes of her school.

It need not be argued that the larger administrative unit, with its capable board under the expert advice of its Superintendent or Inspector, will lead to greater continuity in teacher service. The point will be conceded by all without any desire for further elaboration. Under the proposed set-up then, there will result not only a saving in teacher and pupil time, but an increased efficiency in the teacher's work.

7. The larger administrative unit will increase teacher efficiency in a second way; that is to say, through proper allocation. The Board, on the advice of the Superintendent or Inspector, will be able to consider the particular needs of each school and be in a position to place there the type of teacher that will best be able to give it the kind of service it requires. In our present system, each board of a local district is a law unto itself, and there is little room for the exercise of good judgment in the engaging, and consequently in the placing, of teachers. Furthermore, the Board of the larger unit is likely to scrutinize closely the personal, academic and professional qualifications of the persons whom it engages to serve on its staff. The weak, poorly equipped teacher who can find a place in a system of thirty-three hundred contracting authorities will have a much smaller opportunity to secure employment in a system where the number of authorities is reduced to a minimum of forty-three or forty-five. The stronger teachers are likely to survive; the weaker and less capable will tend to be eliminated. The teaching personnel of the Province will thus be strengthened.

8. Our system of levying and collecting taxes will be greatly simplified by the organization of the larger unit. This will be the case especially if the municipal and school administrative areas are made coterminous.

There will be in this case one taxing and collecting authority, instead of a multiplicity of these, such as now exists. There would no longer be such incongruities as school districts lying in three municipalities, or improvement districts with the taxes being levied, in some cases, by as many as three local authorities. The simplification and unification in our taxing system would be a distinct gain.

9. It has already been pointed out that the only immediate increase in outlay required for larger units of administration would be that arising from the need of an increased number of Inspectors or Superintendents,—approximately eighteen. To offset this, considerable savings would be effected. The most obvious are the following:

- (a) On the salaries of the large number of secretary-treasurers who are at present required, there being one in each school district of the Province.
- (b) On the expense of the annual audit of school books, the law requiring a yearly audit in every district.
- (c) On the cost of building up a library in each school of an area. A scheme of circulating libraries could be introduced which would greatly lessen the expenditure on books.
- (d) On the cost of supplies. A great saving could be brought about by a Board able to make large-quantity purchases instead of buying in small quantities, as is necessarily the method of obtaining supplies at the present time.

10. It may be maintained by some that the larger administrative unit will discourage and even destroy local initiative and pride. Such a result need not follow. There will still be local boards to act as advisory committees and to make representations to the larger boards for improvements and extra services which in their opinion are desirable, and for which the local district is willing to supply the extra funds. It will be found in practice that the community which is able and willing to provide educational facilities beyond the minimum requirements as laid down by the Superintendent and Divisional Board would find ample scope for its ambition to do so.

11. The larger administrative unit would result in a much more efficient management of school business. The divisional Board would meet regularly; for it would always have business to do. The secretary-treasurer's position would be important, and would attract a man of good ability in business. An effort would be made to pay accounts promptly, including salaries. Arrears of teachers' salaries to the amount of \$318,140.06 for the Province, as was the case at the end of 1934, are scarcely conceivable under a system such as would be set up under the larger administrative unit.

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